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SUBJECT: TURKEY: MFA BRIEFS CODEL MURPHY-MCKEON ON
AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ

Classified By: Acting DCM Daniel O'Grady for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Codel Murphy-McKeon attended a lunch on August 4 hosted by MFA U/S Ertugrul Apakan during their visit to Ankara. The delegation discussed the importance of the U.S.-Turkish relationship and current issues in Afghanistan and Iraq. Apakan highlighted the need to build a national, rather than ethnic or religious identity, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and said that Turkey is ready to continue and enhance its cooperation with the United States in both countries. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On August 4 Codel Murphy-McKeon, which included Congressmen Patrick Murphy (D-PA), Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), Bill Shuster (R-PA), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and accompanied by the Ambassador and Congressional Staffers Tom Hawley and Jack Schuler, met with the MFA for a working lunch. The MFA was represented by U/S Apakan, Deputy U/S Ambassador Haydar Berk, Special Envoy for Iraq Ambassador Murat Ozcelik, Head of Americas Department Damla Say, Head of Southern Asia Department Babur Girgin, and Head of Undersecretariat Department Deniz Eke. Both sides stressed the positive and long-standing relationship between the U.S. and Turkey, and the value of such visits to strengthen the bilateral relationship. Both sides also highlighted the number of mutual goals, and the need to work together to achieve them.

AFGHANISTAN

¶3. (C) Apakan began the discussion on Afghanistan by highlighting the special relationship between Turkey and Afghanistan, characterizing the two countries as "brothers." Apakan praised the "revised U.S. strategy" for Afghanistan which he sees as putting an emphasis on more military-civilian cooperation and said that Ankara fully supports this type of cooperation. Apakan advised that the U.S. should work to build a national "Afghan" identity over an ethnic identity for the stability and unity of the country. He agreed with Girgin's point that it is ultimately up to the Afghani people how they will develop their governmental system, but said that a strong central government is essential in order to keep the country together. He said that Turkey predicts a Karzai win in the upcoming elections, and would send election observers to monitor the process. He added that they hope whichever candidate wins would embrace all parties and ethnicities. Apakan also highlighted the problems they see with the education system, noting that it is still producing "mullahs" and needs to be updated to provide Afghanis with modern religious training and a modern education system. He said Ankara considers education a critical aspect in the development of Afghanistan and investment in this sector is crucial. (NOTE: Turkey focuses a significant portion of its aid to Afghanistan on education, and runs one girls school there which it considers a model and test case for other

potential education projects in the country. END NOTE.)

IRAQ

¶4. (C) Apakan had a similar message on the importance of Iraqis building a national identity rather than a religious one. He stressed that one of the most important points to Turkey, along with stability and security, is the geographical integrity of Iraq. Ozcelik said that the Shia coalition, UIA, was again being formed, and worried that this inevitably means there would be a Sunni coalition and a Kurdish coalition as well. Despite this, Ankara is still trying to encourage Iraqis to form more issue-based coalitions. Apakan added that building a strong Iraq is essential to bring back the historical balance between Iranian Shia and Iraqi Shia, and to restore Iraq's place as the regional balance to Iranian influence.

¶5. (C) The lunch concluded with both sides agreeing that mutual cooperation is vital, and that one specific area which might be explored in more depth is increasing educational exchanges. Berk suggested that one possibility was to create more grant exchanges with the U.S. and Turkey for Afghani students, in order to give them an experience in both cultures. He said that exchange programs created generations of Turkish leaders in many fields. Continuing and increasing these programs in all countries is essential.

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